

"COSMOPOLITAN RELIGION."

SOME OF DR. BARTOL'S BELIEFS.

It is difficult to quote from Dr. C. A. Bartol's article on "Cosmopolitan Religion" in the March issue of "The New World," not because there is so little that is quotable, but because there is so much. Dr. Bartol has for many years been a notable figure in the religious world of New-England. He is in a prominent degree a type of Puritan thought touched by speculation and moulded by modern life. It is such men as he, indeed, who are to-day the only intellectual representatives of the old religion of New-England; and what they say must always command attention, if it does not compel assent.

"Every church," says this son of the old New-England theocracy, "ancient or modern, East or West, appears as but an alcove in the great cathedral of the race." The utterance furnishes the keynote to the whole article, which is really the creed of present day liberals, cast in sparkling epigrams. The breaking up of seas, before the light of knowledge, as of ice-bound streams under the rays of the sun, proves our inability to judge where it will stop. Orthodoxy, Episcopacy, the Presbytery, and Catholicity so called, cannot withstand the intellectual blow by which they are all shaken and rent. Sympathetic hands, like telegraphs and telephones, stretch and clasp across all continents to the remotest ends of the earth." We find indicated the least common denominator of religion, as in most of the great religious systems may be found the greatest common divisor. The old-time Churchman hated men to challenge their belief; the modern liberal Churchman hails the old creed to see if they square with the modern religious consciousness. After quoting Emerson's definition of religion as "the doing of all good, and for its sake suffering all evil," he says of Emerson himself: "The pietism of a sevenfold ministerial generation, with accumulations at compound interest, was secreted in his breast, and disbursed as a fund of charity for all mankind, a golden treasury from his life, to last unsupnt in our literature for every coming age. He needed not the bishop's robe, which he could not endure; but he presides over a vast invisible Church. Having to journey over no formal diocese, he confirms and consecrates the followers of an unnumbered flock. Yet while true to his own high mission, he accepts the venerable traditions of the Christian Body, and affirms that, "one pulsation of virtue a whole popedom of forms can uphold and rivet."

Here is a graphic picture of the present religious unrest of the world: "A sect cannot confine the members of its house, unless its premises are defined, and none of its definitions any longer hold. In every denomination the old lines are altered, rubbed out, or taken up. The theological dispute, like that about boundaries of nations and estates of private persons, extends through all Christendom, and in every order of believers bursts into an intermining war more prolonged than any civil conflict ever waged. No two expositors of any system can agree. Every one who puts up a fence, fences out more than he fences in. The wheat and corn wave finer in the broad fields where stone walls once cumbered and contracted the soil. Not to exclude, but to include, is our cry and call. . . . We do not part secular from sacred or restrict Holy Writ to the Bible, or separate man from female, or banish the evil from the goods. The Hebrew rabbi in Boston or New-York, Schindler or Gottheil, cannot be distinguished from any other true believer and faithful worker, and is nobler than many a commanding saint standing at the table of the Lord." To the strict Churchman these words will seem almost blasphemous; but they undoubtedly reflect the thought of many whom he respects as some of the best and noblest men to be found to-day in Christian civilization.

Now is cosmopolitan religion, according to Dr. Bartol, contained within the churches; for "ecclesiastical and statistical religion can claim but part of the credit of social progress in any reform. It did not suffice to establish temperance, or freedom, or domestic purity, or woman's rights. More than half the church went for slavery. Before political division, the secession of faith had, in several of the largest synods, broken the ranks and opened the bloody chasm for war." And again: "To most thoughtful men, there is somewhat not natural, but artificial, like paper flowers, in the customary emblems of the temple devoles, and with many articles of faith, naught seems solid save the stone chancels in which they are cut. In a period of stress and storm we need convictions that will not give way. There are, say the medical doctors, but few specifics; and the creed that is potent will be short." Do you believe in the devil? one was asked, and replied, "Not at all, but only in God." Not enumeration, but emphasis, avail. To love his country was, for the soldier, easily. It will certify the Christian if he love his kind; for so he must love his Creator. Uniformity is impossible, however claimed at the Vatican. A ritual must be local, fixed in some spot, or carried about with the vessels through which it is performed. Plate and cup, and every other sacramental thing are liable to accident, or doomed to loss, like the golden candlesticks. Veneration extends with the bending sky. Conscience beats in every breast."

Of course Dr. Bartol does not believe in the fall, but rather in the rise, of man. "Total depravity is not the true anthropology. There is a cosmopolite religion that grows in the remotest regions of the ever-rising human race. Goodness cannot be a monopoly of any nation or tribe." The whole matter, as seen by Dr. Bartol, is summed up in the following passage, the last we have space to quote: "There are no such lost arts as Wendell Phillips lectured about that are of any worth; and naught precious in any religion can fall or fade away. The fittest survives."

The next of the Holy Ghost.

The dead world will never last;

Even the last present.

Girls with one name the countless host."

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